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Question1: I don't believe that capitalization of program benefits into land prices is the solution. From what little I know about this aspect of farming from personally known sources, Program benefits should remain separate options. Farming is becoming somewhat obsolete anyway due to the larger factory farms developing across the nation. Such ventures seem daunting to newcomers to the farming industry and they are skeptical as to their ability to compete with these companies.

Question2: I have done extensive research into the treatment of farm animals in this country compared to that in Europe for instance. The overall thinking in our country is leaning to more compassionate treatment for farm animals and I personally (as a vegetarian) go out of my way to find alternative food sources because of the horrendous, brutal, and uncompassionate treatment of all of our animals but for this issue, our farm animals. Even if I were not a vegetarian, as a consumer I would take offense at these big companies for the conditions and treatment of these animals. The conditions are horrendous and unhealthy and this causes me to wonder if the end product from these farm factories is also unhealthy. As a consumer it would send me the message that they don't really care about what I am eating as long as it doesn't have a negative affect on their profit! If I ate meat, this would definitely concern me. I have visited and learned a little about one particular meat processing business in my area, and they assure me that their methods are humane for their profitability as well as the welfare of their animals. Perhaps a decrease in factory farming would be a benefit to the small farmer in our country and also raise our standards and quality of product which would, in the long run, keep profits in our country and make us more competitive in the world market.

Question3: I feel that farm assistance should be made more readily available to the smaller farmers. By continuing to fund these large factory farms, it is destroying the ability for small farmers to compete in this field. We would probably have greater product quality and without a doubt animals wouldn't be suffering at the hands of these larger businesses who obviously have no concern for their welfare. No sentient being should be subjected to these horrendous cruelties and painful procedures. While I don't judge or condemn others for eating meat, all farm animals should have the right to a decent quality of life until such time as they are sent to slaughter and at that point they should be treated as humanely as possible without undue pain, suffering and anxiety.

Question4: Factory farms seem to have little interest in protecting the environment let alone the welfare of the consumer. If you think about it, by allowing and actually encouraging these factory farms to continue their operations through continued funding, all you are doing is continuing to allow pollutions into our environment. Huge quantities of animal waste whether it be fecal matter in great abundance sitting around everywhere or dead and diseased animals being in these concentrated areas of these factory farms, you have to know that this is

having a negative affect on the air and water sources in these areas. Factory farms should have greater regulation as to size, methods of handling their animals and should be responsible for providing most of their own funding. If an operation is too large to be funded by it's own resources, then the government should demand the closing or downsizing of that operation instead of funding them to continue in this manner. Funding for any operation should be based on the ability of the organization to comply with established regulations and standards of their individual operation. Non-compliance should mean immediate funding removal.

Question5: By doing more research in individual rural areas to determine what types of farming is conducive to that particular area and providing the encouragement and financial assistance to local farmers in that area to develop a productive business that will benefit a good portion of our local (and to a degree, international) economy. Like many other aspects of progress, farming doesn't have to be a thing of the past. With modern convenience, technology and "moderate" federal intervention into the farming structure of our country, we can once again be productive and competitive in this area with attention being paid to higher standards and closer monitoring of regulations, a part of which is enhancing our integrity as to the humane methods of treatment for farm animals. After all as the great leader Ghandi said you can determine the integrity of a nation by the way it treats its animals!

Question6: I think that before we can hope to develop farming in the foreign market, there are many issues to be addressed here domestically. We will have to get a better handle on our controlling of regulations and requirements for our own producers and farmers. These factory farms are a good example of the lack of control we seem to have over regulating and enforcing conditions and methods. I think greater attention to product quality is first and foremost. It is always profitable to consider the "new and improved" in any aspect of productivity. However, more research needs to be done to determine whether we are actually improving or merely increasing production. Just because "organic" seems to be the going trend, doesn't mean that all attributes being applied to this aspect of farming is what it should be. Farm animals can still be mistreated, confined in inadequate surroundings and subjected to horrendous and inhumane methods while being fed "organic" grains. The terms being applied to our farming practices need to be scrutinized to make sure we are actually making enhancements to benefit the consuming public.

I definitely think developing new uses for farm products is worth researching since this is an area that will encourage small qualified individuals to consider farming again. If the USDA would work closely with these individuals, we definitely have the potential to become a contending factor in the world-wide agricultural market.